




# Need for continuous leadership training on sustainability of United Baptist Church of Zimbabwe



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The significance of leadership in ensuring the efficient operation of any given entity cannot be overstated. The acquisition of leadership skills is an essential component for the success and accomplishment of an organisation's objectives and goals. The church is commonly regarded as an institution and, as such, effective leadership is deemed essential for its long-term viability. The decline of effective leadership within religious institutions is a matter of significant apprehension. What are the implications of inadequate leadership within religious institutions? This article examined the impact of inadequate and infrequent leadership training and the decline of organisational sustainability. The utilisation of a case study approach is employed to examine the United Baptist Church of Zimbabwe (UBCZ). The objective of this article is to provide a response to the following question: What is the impact of inadequate continuous training for leaders on the long-term viability of an organisation? This matter is addressed by drawing upon the extant literature pertaining to the topic. Additionally, it utilises the data collected during the on-site research conducted within the UBCZ. This article analyses selected biblical passages to provide insight into the importance of leadership training.

**Contribution:** This article contributes to the body of knowledge of how effective leadership can impact the flourishing of the church in the changing environment of the 21st century.

**Keywords:** church leadership; church leadership training; church sustainability; organisational sustainability; United Baptist Church of Zimbabwe.

## Introduction

Considerable focus has been devoted to the imperative of the church leaders who possess the capacity to effectively guide the church and guarantee its longevity. The significance of this lies in the fact that the church operates within a societal context characterised by intense competition and heightened stakeholder demands. The dynamic nature of the environment is a crucial determinant in effectively administering the church. Research has been conducted to identify the essential qualities that leaders should possess and the appropriate training they should receive to promote the long-term viability of organisations (Du Plessis & Nkambule 2020; Kretzschmar 2022).

Van Niekerk and Waghid (2004:1) posit that leadership is a pivotal component of organizations, exerting a significant influence on their trajectory and moulding their outlook. Van Niekerk and Waghid (2004:1) asserted that the study of organisational leadership has consistently held a significant position within the realm of organisational research. The recent resurgence of attention towards the evolution of leadership in response to the demands of the knowledge-based society has been predominantly shaped by three key factors over the past decade. These include the excellence movement of the 1980s, the prioritisation of a resource-centred approach to strategy, and the recognition of the unprecedented rate at which the workplace is undergoing transformation (Van Niekerk & Waghid 2004).

According to Von Eck (2007:2), the matter of leadership in the face of change holds significant significance for all organisations in the present unstable business environment. The phenomenon can be ascribed to the increasing impact of transformation, which has led to the decline of several organisations. It is because of this that D'Souza (1995:25) pointed out that leadership has been the primary subject of interest and examination among behavioural scientists due to the substantial influence that leaders have on the attitudes, behaviours, and performance of their colleagues and subordinates. This makes leadership to be an engine room of an organisation as per Peters and Waterman's assertion (1982) that leadership is one of the central themes if organisations want to be successful.

The primary subject matter of this article pertains to the leadership within a religious institution. This article centres on the repercussions of inadequate and insufficient continuous training for ecclesiastical leadership and its impact on the long-term viability of the church. The attainment of this objective will be facilitated by conducting a case study on the United Baptist Church of Zimbabwe (UBCZ). The present discourse shall commence by delineating the leadership scenario prevailing within the UBCZ. Subsequently, this article examines the underlying factors contributing to the current situation. The third aspect of this article involves a normative inquiry in which a critical examination of specific biblical passages will be conducted. Finally, this article will present certain suggestions that can be employed by the church in its endeavour to cultivate leaders who can guarantee the stability of the church by means of continuous education. The concepts in this article of continuous leadership training and continuous training for ecclesiastical leadership refer to an ongoing preparation for leaders in the church organisation, and inadequate leadership training refers to the lack of ongoing preparation for leaders within the church.

This article relies upon existing literature within the discipline of leadership to establish the foundation of its thesis. It is a congregational analysis type of approach. A congregational analysis model is used when one needs to create 'an accurate portrait of a congregation that helps leaders to make informed decision' (Smith 2008:255). In the congregational analysis model, the intention is to work out where a congregation is currently, in order for its leaders to make informed decisions about where to go and how to get there (Smith 2008:256).

## Brief background of the United Baptist Church of Zimbabwe

The United Baptist church has its origins in 1897 when the South African General Mission (SAGM) established a presence in the Rhodesian mission field. The SAGM was established in the 1889 under the name Cape General Mission (CGM). The term *Cape* originally referred to the Cape Province and its principal urban centre, Cape Town in South Africa, where the initial missionary endeavours were concentrated. Dhube (1997:2) reported that the CGM underwent a name change in 1894 to become the SAGM. In March 1897, Harry Raney, John Coupland, and Dudley Kidd arrived in Rhodesia from South Africa with the intention of initiating missionary work. The selected location for settlement was Rusitu, situated in the district presently referred to as Chimanimani which is located in the Manicaland Province near the Mozambique border (Zvobgo 1996:78). Expansion of the ministry's scope was witnessed in the subsequent decades, as its operations extended to additional regions within the Chimanimani district. Until the 1950s, the leadership and administration of the work was under the purview of the missionaries. Throughout that period, the Mission and the corresponding church functioned in a manner that was nearly indistinguishable from one another. During the latter half of the 1950s, dialogues were initiated which ultimately resulted

in the church's independence from the Mission. The deliberations culminated in the ecclesiastical body's adoption of a fresh appellation, namely the Association of the United Baptist Churches of Zimbabwe.

## The current leadership situation in the United Baptist Church of Zimbabwe

Most pastors affiliated with UBCZ receive their training from Rusitu Bible College (RBC), the theological institution founded by missionaries in 1956. According to the RBC official Website (Rusitu Bible College n.d.), the college offers five different programmes, namely National Diploma in Theology, Advanced Diploma in Pastoral Ministry and Biblical Studies, a 3-year Diploma and Certificate in Biblical Studies, a 2-year Certificate in Pre-pastoral Ministry, and a 1-year Certificate in Spiritual Formation. The college offers no degree in the theology programme. This shows how far behind the college is in meeting the needs of the advanced society. Since its establishment, the church has been overseen by pastors who lacked formal education; yet, they were greatly utilised by the divine and possessed divine insight to steer the church. During the 1950s, the church made a strategic decision to prioritise the development of its pastoral leadership through training programs. Dhube's (1997) made the following statement about pastors who lacked formal training during that era:

... it was obvious these men of God had limitations that hindered them from fully utilising their faculties in the service of the church, which was now increasingly expecting something more than leadership leaning on the missionary for advice as to what to do in an urgent complicated or new situation of the late 1950s and 1960. (p. 52)

Over time, as the expectations of church members increased, a select number of pastors sought to enhance their qualifications by pursuing formal education and training. Presently, most church pastors possess certificates and diplomas, with a minority having undertaken or presently undertaking degree-level studies. A limited number of clergymen have obtained postgraduate degrees, while the remainder are either actively pursuing or have already obtained doctoral degrees. Considering the dynamic nature of contemporary society and the evolving needs of the present era, there is a growing apprehension that additional measures are required to adequately prepare pastors to competently serve in the current milieu. Like the ecclesiastical landscape of the 1950s in which the church was imposing greater expectations upon its clergy, contemporary times have witnessed an increase in inquiries regarding the preparedness of the clergy to fulfil the exigencies of the present era.

Keeffee (2000) conducted a study on the Catholic church in Ireland and uncovered noteworthy findings. Keeffee noted that the clergymen are entrusted with the responsibility of spearheading the revitalisation of the

church, despite the limited direction provided to them. He also noted that there is a consensus among the clergy and the laypeople regarding the necessity for both parties to jointly assume the leadership duties of the church. He also observed a necessity for education for both parties to effectively provide the necessary guidance. Keeffee (2000) stated that:

It is not surprising to discover that priests are confused. For many, their seminary training was based on a model of a church that had power and was in control. At the same time, their education and formation in many areas was inadequate. Since leaving seminary, very few priests received any significant further education. For many, the annual retreat provides their only ongoing formation. Such retreat is generally 'hit' or 'miss' affairs and depends on the quality of the retreat director. (p. 558)

The issue that has been delineated, bears resemblance to the leadership of UBCZ. The system, used for pastoral training, has remained unchanged over the course of many years. The predicament is exacerbated by the circumstance that the syllabi, which were formulated by missionaries and are implemented by most theological establishments in Africa, are indicative of Western theology that has not undergone contextualisation (Niemandt 2019:2). Given the ongoing global transformations, the ecclesiastical institutions need to investigate novel approaches to educate and empower its leadership. Consequently, the church should scrutinise its leadership development trajectory to cultivate leaders who can effectively maintain the church. Empirical studies have demonstrated that the process of generating value for faith-based institutions, encompasses the effective handling of change that is rooted in necessity as well as the cultivation of leadership competencies and innovative concepts (Magezi & Nanthambwe 2022:6). Addai-Duah (2020:52) posited that, to satisfy the demands of stakeholders, church organisations must adeptly manage organisational change which necessitates leaders possessing specific skills and competencies.

The dynamic nature of contemporary trends and technological advancements exert both internal and external pressures on leaders in the execution of their responsibilities. Most leaders exhibit a deficiency in the necessary skills to effectively manage the operations of their respective organisations, leading to a decrease in overall performance. Church leaders are faced with various challenges that require effective management to achieve desired outcomes. These challenges include the management of technological advancements, competition, economic unpredictability, government policy changes, and stakeholder satisfaction. The inadequacy of continuous training may result in a deficiency of pastoral skills to address the concerns. Consequently, churches are compelled to compete for the limited number of proficient pastors, as exemplified by the UBCZ. Churches are known to actively seek out pastors who can meet their specific needs and requirements. In certain cases, churches may decline to accept certain pastors on account of their perceived lack of effectiveness.

## Locating lack of ongoing leadership training as the reason why leaders struggle to sustain the church

Studies have indicated that a significant number of organisations, such as churches, lack effective leadership development strategies, which can contribute to their inability to fulfil their responsibilities (Magezi & Nanthambwe 2022; Nanthambwe 2020). Vorster (1999:44) pointed out that the proper training of church leaders is essential for them to effectively carry out their responsibilities of safeguarding the confessions and ensuring that church members adhere to them. The spiritual development of congregants is entrusted to ecclesiastical figures such as pastors, elders, and deacons. De Moor (2010:135–136) rightly stated that it is very important to provide training to elders, deacons, and deaconesses. He (De Moor 2010:135–136) further pointed out that it is crucial that deacons and deaconesses receive training not only in the domain of physical care, but also in the domains of teaching and preaching. The research conducted at UBCZ indicates the absence of a leadership development policy. Continuing education opportunities for the clergy are infrequent. A significant proportion of pastors possess solely a formal education attained during their time in Bible college, with some of them having graduated from college more than three decades ago. According to Addai Duah (2020:55), the impact of religious leaders on society can be multifaceted, encompassing areas such as healthcare, morality, lifestyle norms, governmental policies, and environmental concerns among others. Individuals who have not undergone any retraining in the past three decades may encounter significant challenges in effectively addressing the issues. The present article posits that the primary reason for the church's inadequate preparedness to address contemporary challenges and ensure its longevity is the dearth of continuous training for its leadership.

In addition to the dearth of continuous pastoral training, there is a deficit in the preparation of lay leaders who undertake leadership responsibilities across diverse leadership capacities. The research conducted with UBCZ participants revealed that there is a lack of emphasis on creating a deliberate and supportive environment for leaders to enhance their skills and knowledge. This was unequivocally pointed out by the participants. The availability of refresher courses for pastors is insufficient. Several individuals attained their college education more than 30 years ago and have not engaged in any subsequent training or educational refreshers. The church exhibits a deficiency in implementing a structured mechanism for recognising and guiding promising leaders, resulting in a situation where even those who have undergone theological education are left to their own resources. The suitability of individuals for pastoral roles is subject to a conspicuous lack of scrutiny, and upon completion of their studies, they are assigned to churches without sufficient evaluation of their leadership aptitude. The current situation has led to a decrease in the number of capable leaders within the church, which could potentially

pose a threat to the institution's sustainability. Usually, individuals are elected to positions of leadership and are subsequently tasked with performing their duties without the benefit of any formal training or orientation. Consequently, the concept of leadership is reduced to mere positional occupancy devoid of any functional responsibilities and therefore the church is left with an excessive number of committees and boards that exhibit dysfunctional behaviour. This will result in the pastor assuming complete responsibility for all tasks, even the tasks outside their area of expertise.

The observation made by Startup and Harris (1999) is valid in that overburdening a limited number of church leaders can undermine their ability to foster thriving congregations. This was echoed by Sweet (2004:12–13) who argued that leaders may fail to perform their essential functions due to an excessive number of responsibilities. Wagner (2012:28) elucidates the idea by pointing out that entrusting all responsibilities to a limited number of leaders may lead to certain areas of ministry being ineffective, as it is impossible for a single leader to excel in all aspects of ministry. Consequently, there is a necessity to provide additional training for pastors as well as continuous education for other ecclesiastical leaders, such as elders and deacons, to facilitate the delegation of responsibilities.

There is a need for organisations to continue revising the leadership theories on which they are based. For instance, in the case of UBCZ, this article argues that the lack of leadership training is the main cause of the church's ineffectiveness to fulfil its calling. This shows that UBCZ leadership need to be transformed. Therefore, it is very important that the Transformational Leadership theory is adopted. Von Eck (2007:47) describes Transformational Leadership theory as an approach 'that focuses on developing an appealing vision of the future, providing strategic and motivational focus and appealing to the intrinsic motivation of followers and providing inspiration'. This kind of leadership theory ensures that people are empowered and that they are participating in their own transformation. United Baptist Church of Zimbabwe need this kind of leadership for its sustainability.

## Biblical bases for ongoing training of church leaders

Caliguire (2003:33) asserts that, 'those on a journey often look for wise guidance from others who have travelled that road'. The Bible depicts instances where leaders underwent training or mentoring. While the whole Bible has a lot of lessons to teach on the training of leaders, this article has selected certain passages from the New Testament to emphasise the significance of leadership training in accordance with biblical teachings. The selected passages have been listed due to their explicit articulation of the necessary steps to be undertaken for the purpose of addressing the training and empowerment of church leaders. The aim is not to present a systematic exegesis on the selected passages, but to give an analysis of how training of leadership has been depicted in the Bible.

## Matthew 28:18–20

For a period of approximately 3 years, Jesus engaged in the instruction and guidance of his disciples, with the aim of fostering their spiritual growth and development. Following his resurrection and prior to his ascension, Jesus issued a directive to his disciples to propagate the faith among all nations. The biblical passage of Matthew 28 (New International Version [NIV]) contains a directive from Jesus:

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always to the very end of the age. (vv. 19–20)

Reeder (2008:64) pointed out that there is a lamentable situation in contemporary churches where the preaching and teaching fail to effectuate a transformation of Christians into disciples of Christ. This can be attributed to a deficiency within contemporary religious institutions. Several observations can be made from the passage. In Matthew 4:19, Jesus made a commitment to his disciples that he would transform them into individuals who would attract and bring people to his teachings, likening it to the act of fishing. At the culmination of a triennial period, the individual is actualising the commitment. During the period between Matthew 4:19 and Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus was engaged in instructing and preparing his disciples. Upon his impending departure, he entrusted them with the task of propagating the faith and imparting his teachings to all nations. The directive conveyed in this passage pertains to the cultivation of disciples rather than the acquisition of converts.

Jesus personally dedicated a period of 3 years to instructing, preparing, and guiding his disciples towards the goal of becoming effective disciple makers. Rather than expecting immediate conversion and discipleship readiness, he invested 3 years in his followers to prepare them for the task of making disciples. He commanded them to instruct newly converted individuals to comply with all his commands. The implication of this statement is that Jesus had fulfilled his responsibility of instructing and preparing his disciples, thereby enabling them to assume the role of educators and disseminators of knowledge. Jesus employed a model in which he dedicated his time to instructing a selected group of disciples whom he subsequently delegated with the responsibility of training others. As correctly stated by Chipenyu (2021):

The leadership that under-passes or under-emphasises its core functions cannot lead the congregation to the purpose of God. These leaders lack the ability to engage all the members of the church to be active participants. As such they cannot transform members to become disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19–20), who can influence numerical growth. (p. 173)

Jesus recognised the significance of providing training to church leaders to ensure the continuity and longevity of the church. The church's current state can be attributed to the growth that ensued from the limited number of individuals

who received training from Jesus. Thus, the church must emulate the teachings of Jesus and ensure that individuals entrusted with the leadership of the church are adequately trained. Continual training is imperative to enable church leaders to effectively address contemporary challenges. In the current era, leaders are faced with intricate challenges that cannot be effectively addressed by relying solely on training received in the past.

## Timothy 2:2

Writing to Timothy, Paul says: 'And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others' (NIV).

The expression 'in the presence of many witnesses' can be interpreted as 'by means of numerous witnesses'. This phenomenon presents two potential interpretations. Initially, one could construe that Timothy's reception of the gospel was a result of the testimony of numerous individuals and not exclusively due to Paul's conversion efforts. The second interpretation posits that Timothy underwent a conversion experience under the tutelage of Paul, subsequently receiving guidance, education, and authorisation from Paul in the presence of numerous observers.

The second interpretation appears to be the most plausible, as it aligns cohesively with the contextual framework. Furthermore, in other scriptural instances, Paul explicitly designates Timothy as his spiritual offspring (1 Tm 1:2; 2 Tm 1:2). Hence, it can be inferred with certainty that as per the account in 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul imparted Christian doctrines to Timothy in the company of numerous witnesses. The presence of numerous witnesses suggests that the event in question may not have been an isolated occurrence. It appears that Paul consistently instructed Timothy in various locations while being observed by various witnesses. The verse elucidates that Timothy was tasked with the responsibility of confiding the teachings imparted to him by Paul to trustworthy individuals who possess the necessary qualifications to instruct others. The occurrence of this event ensures the long-term viability of the church.

Ongoing training of church leaders improves the quality of church members and the growth of the church. Chipenyu (2021) asserts that:

The quality of members affects the quantity in the direction of growth or decline. If the members are spiritually mature (quality), their quantity increases. If the quality of the members is weak (spiritually immature), the quantity is reduced. The reason is clear. The members cannot influence other people to become Christians and even the spiritually weak members would not remain in the church. (p. 46)

Timothy's eligibility to be entrusted with the gospel can be attributed to his tutelage under Paul and the guidance he received from his mentor. In a similar vein, Paul is instructing Timothy to apply this principle to individuals who are tasked with the responsibility of imparting knowledge to others.

This verse highlights two crucial aspects concerning the maintenance of the church. Primarily, the text highlights the importance of having leaders or pastors who possess adequate education and training. As per the verse, the task at hand requires a substantial amount of time. In addition, ecclesiastical authorities or clergymen should guarantee that individuals entrusted with the task of instructing others have received adequate education and training.

The act of entrusting an individual necessitates the provision of adequate instruction to ensure that the entrusted individual is sufficiently equipped to impart the knowledge to others. Hence, the continuous education and development of both clergy and laity are imperative for the preservation and longevity of the church. The expression 'reliable men who will be qualified to teach' holds significant meaning. This necessitates that individuals who are deemed dependable and possess the necessary qualifications are entrusted with the responsibility of instructing others rather than indiscriminately assigning this role to every individual. This article posits that an individual's reliability and competence are contingent upon their eagerness to acquire knowledge, thereby enabling them to impart the same to others. Individuals who lack the willingness to acquire knowledge and engage in ongoing training ought not to be bestowed with the responsibility of instructing others. An effective educator is an individual who consistently engages in the process of acquiring new knowledge and skills. Ceasing to acquire knowledge marks the point at which an individual's personal development halts, rendering them incapable of effectively guiding a church and ensuring its long-term viability.

## Ephesians 4:12–14

Explaining the purpose why God gave prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to the church, Paul says:

To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (NIV)

According to Stott (1984:166), there are two objectives, namely an immediate and an ultimate one. The primary objective is to equip and educate individuals within the faith community for the purpose of engaging in acts of service. The primary objective is to facilitate the growth and strengthening of the Christian community. The statement suggests that failure to identify the proximate objective may impede the attainment of the ultimate objective. Stated differently, the development of the church is contingent upon the preparation of God's followers for tasks of ministry. This highlights the significance of providing appropriate training to individuals with relevant talents and leadership responsibilities within the lay community. Looking at verse 13, the process of attaining maturity entails the involvement

of all believers, who must be in a state of unity in their faith and possess a shared understanding of Christ.

Engel and Dryeness (2000:116–118) make the accurate observation that the priesthood of believers is centred on witnessing and professing to one another and the world. This can only be accomplished if church leaders invest time and effort in educating members in sound doctrine and faith. Consequently, the church will become perfect in Christ. If there is a lack of training in the church, there will be a lack of maturity, resulting in stunted development, with believers remaining as immature children susceptible to any form of teaching. This poses an undeniable hazard to the church's continued existence.

A church that does not provide leaders and members with ongoing training in sound doctrine lacks a solid foundation and will have members with insufficient knowledge of Christ. The future of such a church is uncertain, because its members are susceptible to false teachings. As in the time when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, there are false instructors whose livelihood depends on peddling falsehood and misleading weak Christians. For the maturation of the entire body, the church must have well-trained leaders who can equip church members for work of service.

The primary function of ecclesiastical leaders is to prepare and empower every member of the congregation for active ministry. The responsibility of identifying, empowering, and allocating members to specific ministries based on their spiritual gifts falls upon the leaders. Chipenyu (2021:64) usefully explains that the responsibility of providing training in the church lies with its leadership. If training is not conducted, the leaders are held accountable. A church that has leaders who possess the capacity to prepare adherents for the labour of ministry is indicative of a robust institution with a secure future. As per the contents of this excerpt, it can be inferred that the bestowal of gifts by God upon every individual within the church is intended to promote the well-being and advancement of the church. One of the current challenges confronting the church pertains to the lack of training or ongoing training opportunities for gifted members to effectively utilise their talents. A leader lacking the ability to provide adequate training and development opportunities for church members can impede the expansion and long-term viability of the church. For leaders to effectively train others requires that they also engage in ongoing training themselves.

### **Romans 15:15; 2 Peter 1:12–13**

To the believers in Rome (Rm 15:15), Paul says: 'I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me' (NIV).

The apostles placed great emphasis on reminding the church on important things. In 2 Peter 1:12–13, Peter writes:

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body. (NIV)

Stott (1994) rightly asserts that:

[T]he apostles attached great importance to their reminding ministry ... had been entrusted the task of formulating the gospel and thus laying the foundations of the faith ... they kept reminding the churches of the original message and calling them back to it. (p. 378)

If it was essential for the apostles to emphasise the original message and other significant aspects of Christianity to the church, it should then be similarly imperative for the contemporary church to do the same. This holds greater significance in the present dynamic scenario. It is crucial to consistently remind both clergy and lay members of the church of key elements to maintain their efficacy and ensure the longevity of the church. It is insufficient for ecclesiastical authorities to depend solely on their past training and anticipate continued effectiveness and church sustainability. The apostles were cognizant of their audience's pre-existing knowledge; yet, they deemed it imperative to reiterate these concepts repeatedly. They were unwilling to rely on luck or uncertainty. It is important for ecclesiastical authorities to prioritise and guarantee the consistent provision of education and instruction to both the laity and leadership. This may entail reiterating concepts that were previously imparted to leaders.

## **Recommendations for ongoing training of church leaders to ensure organisational sustainability**

This section outlines pragmatic approaches that the church may employ to facilitate the training of church leaders, thereby enhancing their capacity to lead the church and promote organisational longevity. The proposed guidelines entail the instruction of clergy members, non-ordained leaders, the partners of clergymen, and the entire congregation.

### **Refresher courses for pastors**

Initially, it is recommended that all pastors partake in annual refresher courses. Refresher courses have the potential to mitigate educational disparities among pastors. This demands to meticulously choose the topics to be covered to ensure that pastors are adequately prepared to address the contemporary challenges confronting the church. Refresher courses can serve as a mechanism for pastors to recall the knowledge and skills acquired during their tenure in theological institutions. It is possible that certain pastors may not have utilised the various tools acquired during their college education, resulting in a potential loss of said tools over time. There are newly developed courses in colleges that may not have been familiar to pastors who completed their college education prior to their introduction. These courses have the potential to promote uniformity among pastors.

## Training of lay leaders

Additionally, there are training programs designed for non-professional leaders. The initial training program is intended for individuals who hold leadership positions within local church communities, including elders, deacons, Sunday school instructors, and leaders of various church departments. The church ought to generate leadership training resources that can be utilised to instruct newly appointed leaders. The instructional material ought to provide adequate training to all leaders in their respective positions. This will facilitate the ability of non-professional leaders to effectively fulfil their responsibilities.

It is fallacious to presume that individuals have the knowledge of their responsibilities solely based on their inherent abilities and their appointment to leadership roles. This approach represents an optimal means by which the church can cultivate capable leaders and establish robust boards that effectively steer the organisation towards the attainment of its objectives. Inadequate training of office bearers may lead to individuals assuming positions without fulfilling their expected duties. Individuals who are assigned duties without adequate preparation tend to experience a deficiency in self-assurance and may become disheartened. As stated by D'Souza (1995:99), a deficiency in self-assurance can accumulate and ultimately result in feelings of disappointment. The experience of frustration may result in individuals attributing their shortcomings to external factors and holding others accountable for their perceived inadequacies.

This article suggests that Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is the subsequent tier of instruction for non-professional individuals. The training program, which was centred on elected officials, ought to be expanded to encompass all members of the church according to the proposition. In contrast to the current practice which denotes a brief program executed shortly after the appointment of leaders, TEE represents an extensive program. The proposed program bears resemblance to the one employed in Bible college, albeit with certain modifications, particularly in the training methodologies to better align with the contextual requirements. The involvement of Bible college instructors in program development, coupled with the support of competent pastors from the local church, can aid in the successful implementation of the program. This program aims to equip lay leaders with a solid foundation in scriptural knowledge and the necessary skills to effectively fulfil their responsibilities. The author suggests that, although TEE ought to be accessible to all members of the church, it is advisable that after a duration of 5 years after its establishment, any lay individual aspiring to assume a leadership role at the local, district or national level should have completed this program. Inclusion of this criterion ought to be considered as a prerequisite for the designation of leaders. This measure aims to guarantee that individuals selected for leadership roles have a strong foundation in scriptural knowledge and adhere to the Christian faith.

Writing to Titus about one of the qualifications of an elder in Titus 1:9, Paul says: 'He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it' (NIV).

Regrettably, the crucial criterion of upholding the reliable message is no longer receiving due emphasis in the contemporary process of appointing elders, leading to the selection of certain individuals who lack a steadfast commitment to this imperative. This presents a significant threat to the church, as a visually impaired individual is incapable of guiding others. The effectiveness of a follower is contingent upon the quality of leadership provided by their leader. The root cause of this unfortunate circumstance can be attributed to the absence of any leadership or general membership training program within the church.

## Equipping of all believers for works of service

Furthermore, this article advocates for a deliberate and continuous instruction of every member of the church to equip them for the performance of various ministries as stated in Ephesians 4:11–12. It is noteworthy that the preparation of every member of the church for their role in service is a consequence of the two trainings. On the word of Reeder and Swavelly (2008:152–153), upon receiving adequate training, trainees tend to exhibit traits and behaviours like those of their trainers. If church leaders received adequate training, they will have the ability to effectively instruct members for the purpose of service.

Subsequently, the proficient members of the church will possess the capability to execute diverse tasks within the ecclesiastical institution. Consequently, pastors will be afforded ample time to engage in their designated and specialised duties. During the early period of the church, it was observed that in the absence of designated personnel to oversee the material requirements of the underprivileged members of the congregation, the responsibility was assumed by the disciples. Acts 6:1–4 shows that the disciples made a request to the church to appoint competent individuals to carry out certain responsibilities, allowing the disciples to focus on their primary tasks. This observation highlights the potential consequences of inadequate preparation of church members by their leaders with the result that the latter may become overburdened with tasks and unable to fulfil their intended roles.

The act of providing training to members of a church can be viewed as a means of equipping leaders, as it allows them to effectively utilise their talents and abilities. The aforementioned action serves to alleviate the burden borne by the individual in a position of leadership. Assigning excessive responsibilities to the pastor can result in reduced effectiveness. Chipenyu (2021:138) mentions that the reason for this is that ordained leadership tends to distribute their efforts across multiple tasks, resulting in minimal success in each of them. Each member of the church has spiritual gifts bestowed upon them by God, which they are encouraged to

utilise for the betterment of the church community. It is a widely accepted notion that no individual has all the gifts in isolation. For the ministry to achieve effectiveness, it is necessary that responsibilities are distributed among the stakeholders.

The fact that Jesus, being the son of God, chose disciples and equipped them, means that no one leader can do ministry by him- or herself. The primary responsibility of leaders is to discern the unique talents and abilities of each member and facilitate their utilisation, resulting in the attainment of spiritual maturity in Christ. The complete readiness of a church leader is contingent upon the comprehensive preparedness of all members of the church, who must be proficient in utilising their diverse talents within the ecclesiastical community. This is the way the church can be assured of success and sustenance.

The initial step in providing members with the necessary tools is to ascertain their individual talents and abilities. Most of the time, the gifts show themselves through what members are already doing or love doing in the church. After identifying the gifts, the subsequent objective is to facilitate the members with the necessary tools to effectively utilise their gifts in a synchronised manner. This entails arranging the congregation in accordance with their respective talents and the ecclesiastical functions of the church. Some of the members become ministry leaders.

### Training of pastors' spouses

The fourth group of people recommended by this article to be continuously trained is the pastors' spouses. The spouses of pastors hold a significant position in the ministerial activities of their partners. The success of a pastor's ministry can be attributed to the presence of a capable partner. On the other hand, if a pastor has a spouse who is not supportive or is ineffective, his or her ministry will not be successful. This means that the church has a role to play in equipping the pastors' spouses with regular training. In the UBCZ, most pastors are male while just a handful are female. Several female pastors are in matrimony with individuals who are not ordained as pastors.

This article posits that training is necessary for the spouses of pastors, regardless of gender. This applies specifically to the spouses of female pastors. Simultaneous training can be conducted alongside the process of retraining pastors. It is feasible to conduct these sessions on a yearly basis at a consistent location, while also providing refresher training to pastors to facilitate the possibility of joint sessions. There is a need to seek guidance from local churches to identify the specific areas that require instruction for pastors' spouses. Chipenyu (2021:124) asserted that the involvement of churches in the process of curriculum development is crucial, as it enables pastors to effectively respond to the needs and expectations of their congregations. The training of pastors' spouses holds equal significance. The individuals who conduct refresher courses for pastors can also be

responsible for providing the training. The experience of senior pastors' spouses can also be highly beneficial in this context.

## Summary of this study

This article examines the impact of inadequate and infrequent training of church leaders on the long-term viability of organisations, using the UBCZ as a case study. This article commences by examining the leadership scenario prevailing in the UBCZ. It has been observed that historically, there have been instances where church leaders have demonstrated a deficiency in their ability to effectively address the challenges encountered by the church. It has been observed that despite the current leadership of the UBCZ being comprised of trained pastors, in contrast to its earlier days, certain members of this leadership cohort are encountering difficulties in effectively guiding the church towards long-term viability. The varying educational backgrounds of the pastors have also been duly acknowledged.

The dynamic nature of the contemporary world has led to an observation that certain pastors within the UBCZ may be facing challenges in meeting the demands of the present generation of believers. This phenomenon has resulted in a situation where churches at the local level within the denomination are competing for a limited number of highly skilled pastors. The article posits that the root cause of this issue is the absence of continuous training for both the clergy and the laity. The Bible explicitly demonstrates that individuals entrusted with the duty of guiding and instructing others are expected to engage in continuous education. This article demonstrates this by examining the methods utilised by Jesus to equip his disciples as well as the approaches employed by the apostles to train church leaders for effective ministry. Practical measures that can be implemented to facilitate effective leadership by church officials and ensure the long-term viability of the church as well as the implementation of the subsequent pragmatic approaches are proposed, namely that:

- the church must have refresher course programs for the pastors
- the lay church members who are elected to different positions be trained before assuming duty
- the church introduces a tee program
- there be a training for pastors' spouses
- all church members be equipped for works of service.

## Conclusion

The efficacy of an organisation is contingent upon the quality of its leadership. The provision of adequate training and development opportunities for church leaders is crucial in ensuring the prosperity and longevity of the church. In instances where the church neglects to adequately prepare its leaders, the outcome is a hindrance to the



church's ability to attain its objectives, thereby jeopardising its long-term viability. Continuous training for leaders is a viable approach that the church can adopt to equip its leaders. It is needful that pastors engage in ongoing training and attend refresher courses to maintain their relevance and effectively lead the church, thereby ensuring its sustainability. Continual training of lay leaders is imperative to enable pastors and lay-leaders alike to effectively prepare the saints for acts of service. Upon the occurrence of this event, the collective body of believers in Christ will attain a state of unity in their faith and comprehension of Christ. Consequently, they will achieve a state of completeness in Christ and will no longer be susceptible to being swayed by various doctrines and beliefs, as stated in Ephesians 4:13–14. In this way, the sustainability of the church can be achieved.

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## Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exist.

## Authors' contributions

V.M., I.M., and P.N. contributed equally to the research for; and writing of the article.

## Ethical considerations

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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